

February 22, 2017

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Holly Buckley. I am the mother of a 19 year old young man severely impaired by autism, apraxia, dysarthria and obsessive compulsive disorder. For all intents and purposes Harry is non-verbal. He can spontaneously produce, without prompting, 12-15 words. He weighs 250 pounds, is 6 feet tall. He is prone to self-injury and aggression. He is both my heart's delight and a profound burden. He cannot be left unattended for any amount of time. He has no sense of self-awareness or danger.

For the past 16 years we have worked tirelessly with our school district and Harry's school team. Our hope has always been that Harry will be/can be a contributing member of his community. After unrelenting effort, thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars we find now that Harry will not have access to day and employment services upon graduation due to cuts to the DDS budget.

From a very practical standpoint this is hard for me to understand. From an emotional standpoint it is impossible to comprehend. I cannot imagine a time when Harry has no planned outlet for any hours of any day. Right now, with an excellent school program in place, week ends at our house are a challenge. Week long breaks from school are truly taxing. Harry starts to lose basic daily living skills and his behavior deteriorates quickly after just two or three days out of school. The three week break at the end of each school year requires both my husband and I to be home because it's simply too hard for one person to care for him. He needs the structure and stimulation that school provides.

We are not alone in this story. Many families experience the same difficulties. Similarly, adult day programs provide, in just that little bit of time each day, some structure and a chance at meaningful employment and recreation. They have a tremendous impact on the lives of adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. Without adult day services and community supports I don't know how families with children like Harry can work, grocery shop, do homework with other children, participate in the lives of their other children, shower, cook dinner, etc. Right now, I live my entire life during school hours because once Harry is home I can't do anything else.

For my family I can honestly say that I can only see a dangerous and unsafe time ahead without access to day services. I'm not being dramatic or exaggerating, it's simply the truth. For people like my son we can only occupy so much time at home before things really start to fall apart. Self-injury and aggression always increase during unprogrammed time. I won't go into the details of these dark times but I will tell you he is sadly a danger to himself, his sister, brother

and parents. Ten years ago, even five years ago, Harry would have been placed in a group home and would already be receiving full time support without a single question.

I have no doubt that we will quickly find ourselves in an emergency room or psychiatric facility if upon graduation Harry does not have access to day and employment supports. These cuts will make an already difficult situation unimaginable. However with proper support children and adults like Harry can flourish and succeed.

Please, we need your help. You will never find families that work harder than those with a loved one with IDD. Please restore funding for Day and Employment Services to the DDS Budget. Please restore funding for the Behavioral Services Program for critically at risk children like Harry.

Please take a keener look at the DDS Budget, it has been made abundantly clear that plenty of funds already exist there that are not being used for the greater good.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Respectfully,

Holly Buckley